



NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

August 13, 2019



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Welcome to Navy History Matters—our weekly compilation of articles, commentaries, and blogs related to history and heritage. Every week we'll gather the top-interest items from a variety of media and social media sources and then link you to related content at NHHC's website (history.navy.mil), your authoritative source for Navy history.

★ WWII@75: Operation Dragoon

On Aug. 15, 1944, 75 years ago, Operation Dragoon—the Allied invasion of southern France—began when the Western Naval Task Force, commanded by Vice Adm. Henry K. Hewitt, landed the Allies between Toulon and Cannes. On the heels of the successful [invasion of Normandy](#), Operation Dragoon was an enormous victory for the Allies in that it made it possible to liberate Paris less than two weeks later and cause large-scale casualties to Nazi forces. Altogether, more than 2,250 ships and craft took part in the landings and supporting operations. From Aug. 15–Sept. 25, 325,000 troops, 68,500 vehicles, 490,400 tons of dry cargo, and 325,750 barrels of wet cargo were landed in the objective area. To learn more, check out the new [Operation Dragoon: The Invasion of Southern France](#) page on [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhnc-series/nh-series/SC-193000/SC-193146.html>

★ Wasp ARG Reflects through Waters of Coral Sea

During the past two months, the flagship of the *Wasp* amphibious ready group (ARG), [USS Wasp \(LHD-1\)](#), sailed through the Coral Sea during the bilateral, biennial exercise Talisman Sabre. During the transit, the ARG passed through the same waters where [Wasp \(CV-7\)](#) was lost during [World War II](#). To reflect on the lives lost, *Wasp*, Amphibious Squadron 11, and the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit held a wreath-laying ceremony to honor their service. On Sept. 15, 1942, after *Wasp* completed flight operations for the day, two I-19 torpedoes from a Japanese submarine struck the ship. The attack was described as “the single most devastating torpedo spread of the war.” In the end, the ship and 173 of her crew were lost. “As we pause to remember all of the lives lost that day, we must also remember the importance of keeping our [naval history](#) alive. By looking back and recognizing the loss almost 77 years ago, we are able to ensure today's fleet does not relearn old lessons.” To learn more, [read the blog](#) by Capt. Jim McGovern, Commander, Amphibious Squadron 11.



Photo Link: https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/files/2019/08/48460049347_d6976e6e1b_z.jpg

★ National Aviation Day

In observance of the anniversary of Orville Wright's birthday, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established in 1939 that Aug. 19 would be [National Aviation Day](#). The purpose of Roosevelt's proclamation was to encourage U.S. citizens to observe the day with activities that promote interest in aviation. [NHHC](#) has plenty of information on [naval aviation](#), including [paintings](#), [imagery](#), [blogs](#), and the world's largest naval aviation museum—[National Naval Aviation Museum](#) in Pensacola, FL. Check out all of NHHC's resources and make it a great National Aviation Day.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhnc-series/nh-series/80-G-651000/80-G-651890.html>

★ SECNAV Establishes History Section

On Aug. 18, 1918, 101 years ago, the Secretary of the Navy established a history section under the [Chief of Naval Operations](#) that directed historical material on [World War I](#) eventually be collected there. The directive emphasized that no hampering or interference with the war effort should be permitted to occur in obtaining information. Recognition of the importance of the historical aspects of naval operations and the growing volume of war records resulted in the appointment of retired Rear Adm. [William W. Kimball](#) as head of the new section. In compliance with the secretary's order, Adm. [William Sims](#) created a historical section in the staff of the U.S. Naval Forces operating in European waters. In dispatches and correspondence, Sims stressed the importance of adding trained historians to his staff, but before properly qualified officers could be selected for the historical project, Armistice was declared. To learn more, read [Office of Naval Records and Library 1882–1945](#) at [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/publications/documentary-histories/wwi/april-1918/illustrations/sims-staff.html>

★ CNO Directs Consolidation of Navy Museums

On Aug. 16, 2005, 14 years ago, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. [Michael G. Mullen](#) announced the consolidation of all [Navy museums](#) under the then-Naval Historical Center with the issuance of [NAVADMIN 201/05](#). The Navy museum system realignment provided “more effective management of operations in the areas of manpower, collections preservation, accountability, exhibitions, and outreach, as well as addressing growing congressional interest in Department of Defense museum operations while continuing to encourage local foundation support and local command interest.” The change became effective later that year.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-95000/NH-95296.html>

★ *Stout* Commissioned

On Aug. 13, 1994, 25 years ago, [USS *Stout*](#) was commissioned at Houston, TX, with Cmdr. Carl E. Garrett Jr. in command. The ship is the sixth Arleigh Burke-class destroyer and is named for Rear Adm. [Herald F. Stout](#), who received multiple awards for his service during [World War II](#) and the [Korean War](#). Most notably, *Stout* received the [Navy Cross](#) twice during the [Solomons Campaign](#) and the [Silver Star](#) for “conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action against enemy Japanese forces in Ormac Bay, [Levte](#).” In 2011, *Stout* participated in [Operation Odyssey Dawn](#). The operation's mission was to destroy Muammar al-Qaddafi's ability to attack Libyan civilians, who had fled the country during its civil war, by imposing a no-fly zone. *Stout* fired [Tomahawk land-to-air missiles](#) on Libyan military sites during the operation.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-106000/NH-106831-KN.html>

★ *Matthew Perry* Christened, Launched

On Aug. 16, 2009, [USNS *Matthew Perry*](#) was christened and launched at San Diego, CA. The Lewis and Clark-class dry cargo ship is named in honor of Commodore [Matthew C. Perry](#), who led the expedition to open trading between the West and Japan. Hester Evans, who is Perry's great-great-great granddaughter, is the ship's sponsor. On March 11, 2011, a magnitude 9.0 undersea megathrust earthquake occurred off the Tohoku region of Honshu, Japan, causing nearly 25,000 casualties, including more than 15,000 killed. The U.S. initiated [Operation Tomodachi](#) to provide humanitarian relief to the victims. A total of 24,000 servicemembers, 189 aircraft, and 24 ships served during the operation. *Matthew Perry* supported Tomodachi during 21 days of operations by completing 17 separate replenishments, delivering fuel, and transporting relief supplies.



Photo Link: <https://www.defense.gov/observe/photo-gallery/igphoto/2001633472/>

★ WWII Sailor Posthumously Awarded Purple Heart

A Sailor aboard USS Eagle No. 56 during World War II received the Purple Heart 74 years after he was killed while serving on the ship. Seaman 1st Class James Cunningham died April 23, 1945, when an explosion ripped the ship's hull in half just off the coast of Maine. Cunningham's 85-year-old sister, Clara Cunningham Osborne, accepted the award on his behalf during an event recently. "It was an honor to host the Cunningham family here in Millington and provide the family these long overdue awards and recognition of the sacrifices their Sailor and family have made since 1945," said Capt. Al Ross, commanding officer of Naval Support Activity Mid-South. A boiler explosion originally was thought to have sunk USS *Eagle* but, in 2001, the sinking was reclassified as a combat loss after naval historian Paul Lawton and Bernard Cavalcante, then-senior archivist at the Naval Historical Center, found evidence that German submarine U-853 had torpedoed the ship. To learn more, [read the article](#) in *Stars & Stripes*.



Photo Link: <https://www.stripes.com/news/wwii-sailor-posthumously-awarded-purple-heart-after-divers-confirm-boat-sunk-by-nazi-torpedo-1.592376>

★ Twins Killed Together, Buried Together

They joined the Navy together in 1938, and were stationed together at Pearl Harbor when on Dec. 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked. Their ship, USS Oklahoma, took three torpedo hits almost immediately. The remains of Rudolph Blitz and his brother Leo were identified recently and returned to Lincoln, NE. They were buried together, Aug. 10, with full military honors—two caskets, two 21-gun salutes, two invocations, and two flags presented to their surviving sister, Betty Pitsch. The twins' 93-year-old sister's DNA helped bring them home. "It's really hard to use the term 'uncles,' because they were always 'the boys,'" said Sandy Cox, a niece born five years later. "The boys or the twins, that's how they were referred to in the stories we were told." The boys were buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu with nearly 430 other Sailors and Marines. In 2015, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency unearthed the remains and began the process of identification. To learn more, [read the article](#) in the *Navy Times*.



Photo Link: <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/08/08/twins-killed-together-to-be-buried-together/>

★ First Underwater Veterans Memorial Open for Divers

The ribbon cutting ceremony was anything but typical. Instead of standing on the steps in front of a building, Heyward Matthews, a professor of oceanography at St. Petersburg College, stuck oversized scissors in the water and cut a ribbon between two boats. The ceremony marked the opening of the nation's first underwater dive memorial honoring veterans. It is located 40 feet below the surface, 10 miles off the coast of Dunedin Beach, FL. Matthews has been pushing the idea for the "Circle of Heroes" for almost a decade. "I just wanted something that was going to be permanent and also wanted something that was going to honor our veterans in a unique and different way," he said. The memorial currently features 12 life-size statues depicting servicemembers from all five branches. To learn more, [read the article](#) in the *Military Times*.



Photo Link: <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/2019/08/05/the-first-underwater-veterans-memorial-is-open-for-divers/>

★ NHHC Webpage of the Week

The Navy recently [released its list](#) of the 4,744 first class petty officers chosen to become chief petty officers (CPOs). In celebration of their milestone, this week's Webpage of the Week is the Chief Petty Officer page. Officially established on April 1, 1893, CPOs are known for their exemplary technical expertise, superior administrative skills, and strong leadership. Most importantly, CPOs bridge the gap between officers and enlisted, acting as supervisors and mentors for their Sailors. On this page are multiple resources to explore, including the history and tradition of the CPO, Z-grams, blogs, notable CPOs, an [infographic](#) and selected imagery. Check it out today and learn more.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/news-and-events/multimedia-gallery/infographics/heritage/chief-petty-officer.html>

★ Today in Naval History

On Aug. 13, 1952, while serving during the [Korean War](#) with the 1st Marine Division Rifle Company, Hospitalman [John E. Kilmer](#) demonstrated extraordinary heroism, moving from one position to another administering aid to the wounded and expediting their evacuation while under intense enemy mortar, artillery and sniper fire. While administering aid to a fallen Marine using his own body as a shield, Kilmer was mortally wounded by flying shrapnel. For his “conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty,” Kilmer posthumously received the [Medal of Honor](#).



For more dates in naval history, including your selected span of dates, see [Year at a Glance](#) at [NHHC's website](#). Be sure to check this page regularly, as content is updated frequently.

Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/us-people/k/kilmer-john-e/80-g-708891.html>